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ROBERT AITKEN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

1993

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Stefan Wolpe

Friday, April 30, 1993
8 pm
Betty Oliphant Theatre

Stefan Wolpe: Program #1

Elliott Carter
Inner Song. In Memory of Stefan Wolpe, 1991-92.*
Cynthia Steljes, oboe

Stefan Wolpe
Suite im Hexachord, 1936.*
Cynthia Steljes, oboe
Stanley McCartney, clarinet

Stefan Wolpe
Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion and Piano, 1955.*
Cynthia Steljes, oboe
Simon Fryer, cello
Rick Sacks, percussion
Marc Widner, piano
Robert Aitken, conductor

Intermission

Stefan Wolpe
Songs from Berlin, 1929-1932.*
Jody Karin Applebaum, mezzo soprano
Marc-André Hamelin, piano
Haben Sie Kummer, 1931. Siegfried Moos.
Es wird die neue Welt geboren, 1931. Ludwig Renn.
Brief eines Dienstmädchens mit Namen Amalie, 1929. Erich Kästner.
Wir sind entlassen, 1932. Jean-Baptiste Clément/Walter Mehring.
Arbeit und Kapital, 1931. Martin Lindt.
Die Herren der Welt, 1931. Erich Weinert.

Stefan Wolpe
Battle Piece, 1943-47.*
Marc-André Hamelin, piano

* Canadian Premiere

Presented in co-operation with
The Stefan Wolpe Society

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▼The interlocking themes of this concert are the utopian struggle to change society through art, the artist's concomitant quest to transform oneself, and the composer's collaboration with the performer. The **Songs From Berlin 1929-1932**, composed in the heat of the struggle against fascism, are transformed into **Battle Piece**, abstract music for the concert hall. The collaboration with the oboist Josef Marx spanned the **Suite im Hexachord** to the **Oboe Quartet**.

▼In 1929 Wolpe committed himself completely to the anti-fascist cause and almost certainly attended Eisler's classes on music and the class struggle at MASCH (the Marxist Workers' School). He was caught up in an intense round of composing and performing music for left wing cabarets and Communist agitprop troupes, dance groups, and theatre companies. During four crisis-filled years he composed over 50 songs, cantatas, and revues, and wrote music for four full-length theatrical shows—one for the choreographer Hans Weidt's dance ensemble and three for *Truppe 1931*, a company led by the playwright and director Wolfgang von Wangenheim. By 1931 Wolpe was along with Eisler, Rankl, E.H. Meyer, and Vogel, a leading composer for the worker's movement and had composed the principal anthems for important workers' organizations. In fact, after Eisler Wolpe was the most prolific composer of agitprop songs. Several of Wolpe's songs of struggle were published as broadsheets in Berlin and in collections and octavos in Russia that were printed in runs of 2,000 to 10,000 copies and distributed internationally.

▼**Haben Sie Kummer** was written for the agitprop troupe *Roter Wedding*, which formed in the north Berlin working class district of Wedding after the bloody May Day parade of 1929, when 30 Communist marchers were shot and killed by police. The song was included in the 1931 revue *Wir sind ja sooo zufrieden* [*We are sooo very happy*] to which Brecht, Renn, Weinert, Ottwalt, Eisler, and Weill contributed songs and sketches. Wolpe's setting underlines the witty satire of bourgeois entertainment with a sprinkling of hit-song (*Schlager*) harmonies.

▼Wolpe composed **Es wird die neue Welt geboren** in 1931 for the dance drama *Passion eines Menschen* [*The Passion of a Man*], which was choreographed by Hans Weidt to a scenario by Ludwig Renn based on the book of 25 woodcuts by the Belgian artist Frans Masereel. The song was widely published, translated into English, and regarded as one of the best *Kampflieder* for its revolutionary appeal. It was reputed to have been sung by the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War.

▼In 1929 Wolpe set four texts by Erich Kästner, the enormously successful author of the children's book *Emil and the Detectives*. His poetry, which he often read in cabarets, mixed erotic irony with social satire. **Brief eines Dienstmädchens** is a letter in dialect from a housemaid to her boyfriend. Wolpe's setting underlines the topical wit and wry colloquial language of the poem.

▼The playwright and novelist Walter Mehring and his father Siegmund produced in 1924 a volume of translations into German of French revolutionary poems from the time of the Paris Commune of 1871. The Commune had entered the lore of Marxism as the first government of the workers and an important stage in the international class struggle. It produced the *Internationale* of Eugène Pottier and the present poem of Jean Baptiste-Clément. With the German title *Bankenlied*, **Wir sind entlassen** was set by Eisler in 1931 in his usual *Kampflied* manner. Wolpe's setting shows to some degree a rapprochement with Eisler's style in having a variety of ostinati, although Wolpe's melody and rhythm are more active and the harmony more varied.

▼**Arbeit und Kapital** sets a text by an author who may have been connected with the agitprop troupe *Kolonne Links*. The text condemns international capitalism, naming, among other eminent industrialists Sir Henry Deterding, the first director of Royal Dutch Shell.

▼Erich Weinert was the best-loved poet of the revolution. He read his poetry at cafés and cabarets, collaborated with Erwin Piscator on a KPD Revue, and was much in demand at celebrations organized by various Communist organizations. In 1931 he was

indicted by the Prussian Ministry of the Interior for publishing six phonograph recordings of his songs. Weinert's political verses take up issues with a fierce conviction that lacks the ironic humour of Kästner. **Die Herren der Welt** pillories lords of finance who have their hands in all the pockets of the world. The song is through-composed in marching song style, but with a very rapid "wild" tempo.

▼ The "army of artists" had to flee when the Nazis took power in early 1933. Wolpe left Berlin in the spring, spent some time in Russia during the summer, and then went to Vienna to study with Webern during the autumn of that year. He felt an urgent need to attend to his development as a professional composer after four years of continual engagement in the class struggle. But unlike Hindemith, Eisler, Krenek, Weill, and Vogel he did not have a professional success before 1933. His friend the music critic Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt profiled Wolpe in a 1928 article on the musicians of the Novembergruppe:

Stefan Wolpe, the youngest of the group is a special case. Plunging from ecstasy to ecstasy, from extreme to extreme, passionately investigating the materials and ideology of his art, he has demonstrated in numerous works of all kinds a more than exceptional talent that awaits maturity. Ideologically I would place him between Antheil and Eisler. I attribute decisive technical influences to Erik Satie, Arnold Schoenberg, and Josef Matthias Hauer.

▼ Wolpe realized his intentions of elevating music for the struggle into concert music in the *March and Variations for Two Pianos*, completed in 1933. Ten years later he took up the task again in his **Battle Piece** for piano. *Battle Piece* was to have been the first of a series of works for solo piano entitled *Encouragements*, a project Stefan Wolpe began in 1942 during the darkest days of World War II. On the title page of the first version Wolpe wrote: "Battles, hopes, difficulties/new battles, new hopes, no difficulties." Wolpe finished the first three parts of *Battle Piece* in 1943, sketched the fourth part through to the end and then set the work aside. In 1945

he began numerous compositional studies which addressed problems of composing with interval complexes in an abstract, constellatory musical space. Then in the summer of 1947 he took up *Battle Piece* again, rewrote the fourth part and went on to complete three more sections that dealt with the thematic material of the first three movements in new ways. What had been intended as a suite of separate movements evolved into a complex seven-part structure unified by the successive transformations and accumulations of the fundamental material.

▼Wolpe brings many players to the stylistic arena of *Battle Piece*: the socialistic *Neue Sachlichkeit* and utopian formalism of the Bauhaus; the expressionistic rhetoric and contrapuntal mind-set of Austro-Germanic new music; the subtly inflected rhythms and song-based heterophony of classical Arabic music encountered while living in Jerusalem; the abstract expressionist aesthetic newly emerging in the artistic ambience of New York. Out of these disparate elements emerges in *Battle Piece* a new musical persona that forms the basis for Wolpe's works of the fifties.

▼For Wolpe composers should be active members of the community and must be influenced by, as much as guide and elevate, the musical language of the people. Thus, in *Battle Piece*, as in much of Wolpe's music, the tension between tonal and non-tonal, concrete and abstract ideas is a metaphor for the tension between the collectivity and the individual. The themes of *Battle Piece* are expansively scaled structures derived from what Wolpe calls the "primordial theme," which opens the first section and recurs in each of the following sections. It is a succession of fourteen segments, each of which is formed from a set of two to nine pitches with a distinctive intervallic and gestural content. In this way Wolpe projects pitch-class sets into a tonally elastic environment and evolves what might be called a free harmonic serialism in which the D minor cadences of the first and second movements and the E minor conclusion of the last movement contribute concrete images distinct from functional harmonic references. The primordial theme is abbreviated in the last four movements, in which more stable

forms of the thematic material are interrupted by more mobile and dispersed conditions.

▼After the vigorous strivings of the first movement comes the interior monologue of narrowly bounded melismas of the second movement, the head motive of which was, according to David Tudor, intended to recall the D-minor nostalgia of *Der Einsame im Herbst* from Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. The character of each of the succeeding movements is set by a new countermelody added to some version of the primordial theme.

▼Wolpe dedicated the first version of *Battle Piece* to his friend the socialist author and art dealer Friedrich Alexanian. Then in 1943 David Tudor, an enormously gifted 17-year-old, came to study the piano with Irma Wolpe, the composer's second wife, and composition with Wolpe. Tudor began to learn the *Battle Piece* in 1947 at the time when Wolpe was working on the last part and premiered the piece at a Composer's Forum concert in New York in 1950. Wolpe dedicated the final version to Tudor in recognition of his extraordinary achievement in projecting the piece.

▼Tudor's collaborations with Wolpe and Cage and the young composers who gathered around them—Brown, Feldman, Harrison, Wolff—culminated in two historic recitals at The Cherry Lane Theater in 1952. The first program began with the Boulez *Second Sonata*, continued with pieces by Wolff and Feldman, and closed with Cage's *Music of Changes*. The second program began with Webern's *Variations* and Cage's *Two Pastorales*, Woronoff's *Sonnet pour Dallapiccola*, and Cowell's *The Banshee*. After a pause came Wolpe's *Battle Piece*, and the recital closed with a group by Hauer, Harrison, Wolff, Brown, and Feldman. The two recitals brought into meaningful connection ideas that had been hovering in the air. The programs framed the younger composers whose works were being premiered within two streams of thought—American minimalism and European structuralism. In that diptych of recitals Tudor was more than a peerless interpreter who rose to the challenge of realizing the new music, more than a catalyst who inspired these composers to follow their intuitions, he was a

visionary who understood the complementarity of the constructive and deconstructive imagination in the search for what Feldman called a new "metaphysical place," a place which could only be reached by clearing away traditional paradigms of musical thinking.

▼Beginning in 1929 Wolpe composed songs and piano pieces in a free twelve-tone idiom which he regarded as ideally suited to the proletarian revolution. But his passionate, complex, and dissonant music was criticized by the Party hierarchy, and Wolpe returned to less radical means when writing *Kampfmusik*. After reaching Palestine in 1934 he began to evolve a more differentiated approach to twelve-tone music. In 1935 and 1936 Wolpe composed a series of twelve-tone studies for piano solo and instrumental duo in which he began to work out a synthesis of ideas from Hauer, Schönberg, and Webern.

▼In August of 1936, after completing the *Four Pieces on Basic Rows* for piano, Wolpe began a series of *Seven Little Canons in the Inversion of Two 12-Tone Corresponding Hexachords for Viola and Cello*. He split the chromatic scale into two halves, using each hexachord as both an ordered and unordered set, but without transposition. He assigned one of the hexachords to each instrumental part and proceeded to compose canons in inversion. After three pieces the technique transformed. The last four pieces were composed during the fall of 1936, but were no longer canons, and the instrumentation shifted to oboe and clarinet. In **Suite im Hexachord**, Wolpe reduced his means, composing the first three movements with only the six pitches of one of the hexachords he had used in the *Canons*, and still without transposition. Both hexachords (still untransposed) return for the concluding *Adagio*, which begins with a canon in inversion but then proceeds freely. Relinquishing the constraints of writing canons freed Wolpe to develop a serial approach to harmony by the use of fixed sequences of intervals. It also allowed him to work with the richly decorative melos of the Mediterranean, as in the *Pastorale*. Irma Wolpe recalled how Wolpe loved to listen to shepherds playing pipes in the fields.

▼The switch to a woodwind duo from a string duo marked the beginning of Wolpe's life-long friendship and collaboration with Josef Marx (1913-1978), the multi-talented oboist, musicologist, music dealer, and publisher. Marx, arrived in Palestine from the U.S. at the age of 22 to play first oboe in the Tel Aviv Symphony. He also studied with Wolpe and performed his music, premiering the *Suite* at concerts in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in May of 1937.

▼With Marx's guidance Wolpe explored the furthest reaches of oboe technique in this and his subsequent contributions to the oboe repertoire. The oboist Nora Post has noted that *Suite im Hexachord* makes one of the first requests for harmonic fingering in the oboe literature (8 bars from the end of the first movement) and calls for an extraordinary range. "With a total disregard for existing convention the piece sweeps from the oboe's lowest note to the first A3 in the oboe literature (end of the third movement). Other composers did not begin tentative explorations of this register for another 20 years. (*Persp of New Music*, 20:142, 81-82)

▼Wolpe composed two more major works for Josef Marx, the *Oboe Sonata*, 1941, and the **Piece for Oboe, Cello, Percussion and Piano**, which he also called the *Second Oboe Sonata*. In a letter to Marx from Black Mountain College in North Carolina Wolpe wrote:

I finished one big movement [the third] of the Second Sonata for Oboe, etc.... I originally thought it is the first movement. But I wish to precede it by an "early morning music" in which I am very much involved this minute. (It will take me a week to finish this movement.) I plan to write then the slow, pure, still, simple, alabasterlike chant of the second movement. Then comes (I think) the one which I finished the other day, which is of a very "concretish," rustic, realistic, con-moto quality. After this I let follow a very short movement-separating affair, and as the last will come a sort of moderato part (which some is of multiple motions, quick, slow, hampered, expressive, popular, and with peopled speech...) (27 July 1954).

Each movement is the composing out of an action, an enactment

of a state of being, sometimes focussed and contained as in the first movement, sometimes wildly digressing and unbounded as in the last, in which the pianist is asked to get up from the piano, turn to the audience, and clap hands and stamp the feet in a dance-like movement. Shortly after finishing it, he wrote of the piece that it was "compressed, 'handy,' tight, wild, fluctuous, sometimes moist and like burning air."

▼Wolpe's compositions and his approach to musical materials made a deep and lasting impression on Elliott Carter, who recalled an episode when Wolpe visited a class of students he was teaching at Dartington Hall in England in the late 50s.

At once, sitting at the piano, he was caught up in a meditation on how wonderful these primary materials, intervals, were; playing each over and over again on the piano, singing, roaring, humming them, loudly, softly, quickly, slowly, short and detached or drawn out and expressive. All of us forgot time passing, when the class was to finish. As he led us from the smallest one, a minor second, to the largest, a major seventh—which took all afternoon—music was reborn, new light dawned, we all knew we would never again listen to music as we had. Stefan had made each of us experience very directly the living power of these primary elements. From then on indifference was impossible.

Carter composed **Inner Song** in memory of Stefan Wolpe and dedicated it to Heinz Holliger, who premiered the piece at Witten in April, 1992. Departing from the chromatic hexachord of Wolpe's *Suite im Hexachord* (but transposing it) Carter meditates on a succession of intervals, beginning with major and minor thirds, tracing elegiac arcs of oboe tone. As Wolpe had before, Carter challenges the oboist with harmonic fingerings and extreme range, but adds the requirement to perform fourths and fifths as multiphonics. Holliger edited the score, providing fingerings for these chords.

Biographies

Jody Karin Applebaum's Canadian debut recital in 1989 was devoted entirely to 20th-century American compositions; since then she has appeared frequently in festivals and concert series throughout eastern and central Canada, including Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Her performances have been broadcast by Radio-Canada, and she has appeared on Canadian television. Recitals in the United States include dates in Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, D.C..

Miss Applebaum holds a Master of Music degree from Temple University, where she studied with Philip Cho. She is an adjunct faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania, where she gives private lessons and directs both church and synagogue choirs in the Philadelphia area. In a departure from her singing engagements, Ms. Applebaum has just completed work as music director for a production of Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*.

First Prize Winner of the 1985 Carnegie Hall International American Music Competition, **Marc-André Hamelin** was born in Montréal, studied at the Vincent d'Indy School of Music, then emigrated to the United States, earning his bachelor and master of music degrees at Temple University, where his principal teachers were Harvey Wedeen and Russell Sherman.

He has concertized extensively throughout North America. He is a frequent soloist with Charles Dutoit and the Montréal Symphony, and accompanied them on the 1987 tour of Spain, Portugal, and East Germany.

Mr. Hamelin's active interest in lesser-known repertoire is reflected in his discography: Leopold Godowsky for CBC Enterprises; William Bolcom, Charles Ives, and Stefan Wolpe for New World Records; and Kaikhosru Sorabji and Frederic Rzewski for Altarus Records. For the Music and Arts label Mr. Hamelin has recorded solo works by Franz Liszt and Charles Valentin Alkan, including the legendary *Réminiscences de Don Juan* by Liszt, and Alkan's monumental *Concerto*, and with Jody Karin Applebaum on a disc of cabaret songs by Britten, Schoenberg and Bolcom. Mr. Hamelin is a four-time recipient of grants from the Canada Council, including the Virginia P. Moore Prize.

Texts

Haben Sie Kummer

Have you got worries? Have you got cares?
Do your creditors not want to loan you any more?
With us you'll find a more beautiful world,
Three hours' forgetfulness for only a few pennies,
for which you have been longing for so long!
With us there is laughter, with us there are tears.

Refrain:

Run to the box office,
Our wares are first class!
Come in, come in, come in!
The show will be your heaven!

Better than Kintopp, better than booze,
The theatre gives a superb high.
With little money never despair,
The stars of the stage will inspire you.
Our talents are specially for you.
We'll also teach you something.

Our theatre has a moral,
Robbery, murder, the pangs of love,
Can't touch the power of the state.
We respect the order which now exists.
We invite you to the best of good things.
Only lofty hours and serious minutes.

Es wird die neue Welt geboren. Ludwig Renn

A just new world is in creation,
From war and poverty made free.
Class victims slain for liberty
Unite the men of every nation.

Then shall no willing, able worker

Lie jobless in the city street.
Old people shall not want for meat.
No child shall die of cold or hunger.

And by a million hands created,
This giant work shall stand complete.
Old Power shall meet deserved defeat.
From want man shall be liberated.

A just new world is in creation...

Brief eines Dienstmädchens mit Namen Amalie. Erich Kästner

Dear Franz, I want to write you simply
That I can't come this Friday.
The lady of the house is going out of town,
And I must stay in the house
To look after the children and her husband.
You must pardon me, but a job is a job,
And that's what earns us money.
And trust me, or else you'd have to scrounge,
And the kitchen is freshly painted blue.

Refrain:

High class women like to travel to Italy
Ours doesn't go out that much
My dear Franz, think always of Amalia.
And that is the end of it.

The worthy couple wants to have three cars
Because they are taking nine suitcases with them.
I think that also among the high falutin'
things are not always as they seem.
But one shouldn't get mixed up with them.
Everyone does what they shouldn't.
Only if they get caught,
They'll raise a hullabaloo when it concerns them.

And Franz, do you want to wait in front of the house at noon?
You can whistle if you know how .
We can stroll a little in the park
unless you want to go off and dance with someone else.
If you're not there, I'll be annoyed.
There also are benches in the park, dear Franz.
If I see you once more with those women,
Then it's over for me once and for all.

I will always be thinking of you.
I am truly sad, as they say.
If you would like to give me a silver necklace,
buy it soon, or it may be gone.
They're ringing the bell, I have to be packing the bags.
My brother bought me a new hat.
I kiss you in spirit on both cheeks.
That silver necklace would sure suit me fine.

Wir sind entlassen. Jean-Baptiste Clément/Walter Mehring

Refrain

We have been let go! Now it has gone so far,
Dear people, that we march on the banks!
Audit the cashiers!

If you are out of work,
Then you tramp through the city
Like an escaped convict,
Without a crust of bread! Or a drop of beer!
And the walls of our stomachs beat like a drum
When we pass by every bakery.

We have been let go!...

Isn't the only lesson that final salvation will come about
by turning the existing order topsy-turvy?
They swagger about with money and greed
To stamp on the proletariat as the class of the abstemious.

However, when the reckoning comes,
It is important to note
Where the account book is closed,
So that the bosses see that we should be
Allowed to live in comfort...
(la-la, la-la-la)
If it costs us our life.

We have been let go!...

The old State knew it well,
with taxes, forced levies,
and massive bankruptcies;
Now we are making the forced levies,
And today our Republic will mortgage
the debt in our own way.

Arbeit und Kapital Martin Lindt

Whether made in London by Sir Deterding or by Mr. Ford in the USA,
Whether from Siemens in Berlin or Rothschild in Australia,
Whether on city street or avenue or Wall Street,
We have produced it though trade and commerce,
industry, and manufacturing.
Capital is international, the same for every country,
It has to do with profit, consolidation, trust with hand on heart.
The Taylor system is most agreeable, lowest wages possible.
What men cannot do, can be done by machines on an assembly line.

Die Herren der Welt. Erich Weinert

We have our hands in all the pockets of the world.
What falls into our powerful claws,
Blood, iron and coal, everything is money!
Sheer money! Profit! Dividends!
Where diplomats fish in troubled waters,
there we have our fingers in every pie.
Where old soldiers sound the attack,
Highest praises for heroic phrases.

We produce gas and garnet. Disarmament?
"Bullseye!" We still have some idealism in our bodies!
Whether on a street corner or a hostel mattress
a couple of unemployed arouse disgust.
There is no room for sentimentality here!
There are too many for our mines, for our turbines,
for our machines
We must earn profits, we must earn profits!
The sacrifice of coal mine cave-ins and explosions
Must be placed on the altar of civilization.
Of course we sympathize with them!
However, we live for the nation.
We have to earn profits, we have to earn profits!
And if the world explodes, it's an act of God!
Don't delay! Don't delay!
We have to earn profits, we have to earn profits!
Money doesn't smell, cannot rust.
War against the West and war against the East is all the same to us!
We are at our posts! We make the steel!
We have our hands in all the pockets of the world.

Sunday, May 2, 1993
8 pm
Betty Oliphant Theatre

Stefan Wolpe: Program #2

James Tenney

Form 3. In Memoriam Stefan Wolpe*, 1992-93.*

Douglas Stewart, flute

Diane Aitken, flute

Cynthia Steljes, oboe

Stanley McCartney, clarinet

Kathleen McLean, bassoon

Peter Lutek, baritone saxophone

Jim Spragg, trumpet

Michael White, trumpet

Jamie Sommerville, french horn

Joan Watson, french horn

Jerry Johnson, trombone

Scott Irvine, tuba

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Marie Berard, violin

Daniel Blackman, viola

Simon Fryer, cello

Janice Lindscoog, harp

Bill Bridges, electric guitar

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Stefan Wolpe

From Here on Farther*, 1969.

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Stanley McCartney, clarinet

Robert Stevenson, bass clarinet

Peter Serkin, piano

Stefan Wolpe

String Quartet*, 1969.

Accordes String Quartet

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Marie Berard, violin

Daniel Blackman, viola

David Hetherington, cello

Intermission

Stefan Wolpe

Five Songs after Friedrich Hölderlin*, Op. 1. 1924, rev. 1936.

Jean Stilwell, singer

Anne Chamberlain, piano

***Hälfte des Lebens*, 1924.**

***An Diotima*, 1927.**

***Diotima*, 1924.**

***Der Spaziergang*, 1924.**

***Zufriedenheit*, 1924.**

Stefan Wolpe

Piece in Three Parts for Piano and 16 Instruments*, 1961.

Douglas Stewart, flute

Diane Aitken, flute

Cynthia Steljes, oboe

Stanley McCartney, clarinet

Peter Lutek, baritone saxophone

Jim Spragg, trumpet

Michael White, trumpet

Jamie Sommerville, french horn

Joan Watson, french horn

Jerry Johnson, trombone

Scott Irvine, tuba

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

Daniel Blackman, viola

Simon Fryer, cello

Janice Lindskoog, harp

Bill Bridges, electric guitar

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Peter Serkin, piano

Robert Aitken, conductor

*Canadian premiere

** World premiere

Presented in co-operation with
The Stefan Wolpe Society

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▼ This concert frames Wolpe's life's work by bringing his Opus 1 into relationship with two of his last works, the *String Quartet* and *From Here on Farther*. The **Five Songs after Friedrich Hölderlin** is not his first composition, as Wolpe destroyed much of the music he composed before 1925, and only a few songs and solo piano pieces survive from the years 1920 to 1923. The earlier music shows that the *Hölderlin Songs* mark a decisive step in the evolution of Wolpe's style through reconciling the vigorous atonal expressionism of the previous music with the influence of Busoni. Although Wolpe was not formally a member of Busoni's composition class, Busoni took a great interest in him and critiqued his music, counselling him to moderate his tendency to expressionism. For Wolpe Busoni was the greatest musician he had known, and he idolized the master. Busoni died in 1924, the year in which Wolpe wrote four of the Hölderlin settings, so it is unlikely that Busoni saw them.

▼ Jim Tenney regards himself at the confluence of streams flowing from Busoni and Varèse and Schoenberg and Cage. Although he did not know Wolpe, he sees a community of heritage with him. Of the piece he composed on a commission from the Canada Council especially for this concert, he wrote:

Form 3 is the third in a set of four pieces in memory of composers who were important to me in one way or another, as teacher, mentor, or exemplar (the others are Edgard Varèse, John Cage and Morton Feldman). Each piece uses an abbreviated pitch-time notation which requires a certain degree of rhythmic improvisation by the players, although the result is very carefully controlled harmonically, dynamically, and formally. No allusion to Wolpe's style is intended here, though I would like to think that my piece might express something of his provocative energy and spirit.

▼ Wolpe revised the Hölderlin songs in 1935 after he arrived in Palestine as part of the review of his early work that allowed him to regroup his creative energies. The dedications of the songs tell

much about where Wolpe's feelings lay. The first is to Friedl Dicker, the painter who was Wolpe's first great love. He met her in 1920 when she was a student at the Bauhaus. The second is to Ola Okuniewska, a painter from Vienna who was also a student at the Bauhaus, and who Wolpe married in 1927, the year he composed the song. The third is to Anna and Erwin Hirsch—she was a singer and he was a psychoanalyst who treated Wolpe for several months in 1935, helping him through the depression that resulted from the trauma of exile. The fourth is to "the revered memory of Ferruccio Busoni," and the fifth is to the Viennese lieder singer Emmy Heim.

▼The settings of Hölderlin affirms a spiritual place that frames Wolpe's compositions for the voice, as his last work for that medium is the *Cantata*, 1963, which begins with a setting of another Hölderlin poem, *Neue Welt*. Wolpe resonated with Hölderlin's quest for a utopia of the human spirit and for a world in which the archetypal powers are living presences in our midst. Like Hölderlin he was morally outraged by society controlled by brute force, and in his music he too swings between intense expressionism and the most ascetic constraint. By turning to Hölderlin in 1924 Wolpe engages an intensity of poetic image that moves him to a substantial expansion of his lyric gift.

▼The poems, written in the years of Hölderlin's final illness and madness, are meditations on nature, love, and life's journey in language of serenity and lucid detachment. **Hälfte des Lebens**, celebrated as a harbinger of symbolist poetry, is one of Hölderlin's most famous lyrics: "A poem unequalled for pathos, vividness, and conciseness, all the horror of a poet about to be dumb, and of a man who is entering the winter of life" (Michael Hamburger). In Plato's *Symposium* Diotima (Fear the Lord) is the name of a priestess who is quoted on the subject of love. Hölderlin gave the name to a woman with whom he fell deeply in love. The setting of **An Diotima** begins with Wolpe's first twelve-tone melody. The second phrase begins with the same five tones as the first, but changes the order of the remaining pitches. The ode **Diotima** beseeches the Muse to

assuage the chaos of the times, to temper the war with peace-giving music, and restore the calm, majestic nature of humanity. The setting is broad and hymn-like. The verses of **Der Spaziergang** are from the time of the poet's madness, serene, detached, the tension gone. The bucolic scene is imaged as a lilting 6/8 pastorate in strophic form. **Zufriedenheit** is a homily that holds the reader to the loftiest vision of human potentiality. This call for reverence for being, to the quest for individuation, and for making a choice in favour of life that is "grand and sanguine" can be taken as Wolpe's life-long credo. The setting for the first of the eleven quatrains provides the basic material for the remainder except for the contrast of stanzas 6 and 7.

▼Busoni probably did not see these settings, but we can be reasonably sure that he would have approved of them. The forms are clearly articulated through variation and reprise, the voice is seldom doubled in the piano, and there are no obviously illustrative images, expressionistic extravagances, recitative-like declamations, ostinati, or pedal sonorities. There may also be some reflection of Hindemith, as Wolpe would have heard the premiere of *Das Marienleben* at the Weimar Bauhaus Woche in August, 1923. Although Wolpe ventured far and wide in the course of his career, his Opus 1 shows that he belongs firmly in the tradition of 20th-century thought that can be characterized as flowing from the Busonian source.

▼After the expansive pieces of the fifties composed while music director at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Wolpe rethought his aesthetic ends and refashioned his compositional means. He became concerned with "the art of molding opposites into adjacent situations" in contrast to the principle of continuous variation, and with projecting a constellatory, multi-focal space by means of a system of symmetrical and asymmetrical intervallic proportions. **Piece in Three Parts for Piano and Sixteen Instruments**, commissioned by Paul Fromm to celebrate the composer's 60th birthday, is one of the principal works in Wolpe's late style.

Dedicated to his daughter Katharina, the piece gives the piano a dominant presence but not as in a solo concerto. The piano, which is silent for only a few bars, is constantly engaged with the ensemble as an instigator, collaborator, and commentator, but does not take off on its own for a solo section or cadenza.

▼ As in several of the later works Wolpe sometimes enters names and phrases in the score that reveal associations with particular images. In the present work we find "Traces of Debussy" beside the trumpets (b. 28), "Tristan and Isolde" by a clarinet gruppetto (b. 87), and the enigmatic "white patterns..." above a figure in the woodwinds and horns (b. 352). A clue to the feeling-tone of the work as a whole and the undercurrent of conflict that pervades the third part is found at bar 136, where Wolpe wrote beside the flute part: "*A Jewish phrase (like a deep musical scar) commemorating all the slaughtered Jews.*" These words, which must apply to the entire musical image including the *fortissimo* clusters in the piano, place *Piece in Three Parts* among the works like *Battle Piece* in which Wolpe made a statement about the struggle for spiritual and political freedom against the forces of oppression.

▼ Wolpe set forth the technical bases of the piece in the program note he wrote for the premiere (see below). He makes a particular point of the relationship between the pitch content of the series and the instrumentation, but the sketches do not make this explicit. The orchestra functions as a set of ensembles—a woodwind quintet of two flutes, oboe and clarinet, with the baritone saxophone substituting for the customary bassoon; a brass trio of two horns and tuba, which with the saxophone forms a quartet, and a string quartet. The harp and electric guitar complement the piano by intensifying and elaborating its sonorities, while the percussion, principally with timpani, is brusquely independent. As in so many of Wolpe's later compositions the piece breaks from the struggle without offering false hopes for a final resolution or reconciliation.

▼ The composer provided the following note for the premiere on 13 May 1962 at the New School Concerts in New York. Ralph Shapey

was the conductor and Paul Jacobs the pianist.

The *Piece For Piano and Sixteen Instruments* consists of three interfluent parts, the middle of which focuses on the piano as an autonomous and continuous unit, separated from, though coordinated with, a reduced ensemble of, for the most part, two flutes and two trumpets. In the outer parts the piano maintains among the shifts of instrumental combinations (cause by the fluidities and volatile transformations of musical actions) a principle of instrumental constancy, which affirms the sense of the title: *Piece For Piano and Sixteen Instruments*. Only in the last thirty bars is the full ensemble used. The choice of instrumental combinations depends upon the choices made in regard to the serial (fixed) material and is often decided upon by the permutational devices. The functional role of the piano is at times one which initiates action, or ramifies, or multiplies it on other levels. At other times, it opposes, deflects, confuses, destroys events proposed by the orchestral ensemble. Then again, it simultaneously filters or catalyzes them, always a focal force, in the same way as the total musical spectacle is a multifocal force.

The organic quality of the material is of a constantly changing nature. It sometimes exists as a reservoir of a limited amount of pitches from which any number can be chosen and used freely, recombined freely in exchange with other pitches drawn from slightly altered, mode-like formations. Or the pitches are joined in an order whose sequence is at times absolutely unalterable, at other times unalterable only in certain sections, yet in other ones free, as, for example, part of a disorderly pitch conduct.

The idea is to modify greatly the character and tempo of the unfolding of the chromatic circulation in the same way as the level of the musical language is often very rudimentary, often intricately involved, depending upon the generic role the

material is appointed to play, which also (among a host of other things) decides behavior and articulation of content.

▼ In 1963 Wolpe was diagnosed with parkinsonism, which drastically curtailed his physical movements and made writing music extremely difficult. He was gradually reduced to composing for solo instruments until given a reprieve in 1969 by an experimental treatment with the drug L-dopamine. For a period of nine months during which the symptoms were in remission several works blossomed forth including two quartets—*From Here on Farther* and the *String Quartet*.

The **String Quartet** had been commissioned by the Juilliard Quartet, which was founded in 1946. Robert Mann, the first violinist, and Claus Adam, the cellist from 1955 to 1974, had both studied with Wolpe during the late forties, and naturally enough asked Wolpe to compose a piece for their ensemble. For nearly twenty years Wolpe kept it in mind to respond to their invitation. After completing the *Violin Sonata* in 1949, he wrote a set of *Twelve Pieces for String Quartet* as a compositional study amounting to less than 100 bars. In late 1950 and early 1951 he began a string quartet proper, but the pencil sketch breaks off after four pages, as his attention was occupied with another quartet, the *Quartet for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion and Piano*. Through the early sixties Wolpe continued to write music for chamber orchestra and smaller mixed ensembles, but still no string quartet. Then, when the drug treatment gave him the freedom to write again more freely, he composed the *String Quartet*.

▼ The **String Quartet** is among the most lucid and engaging of Wolpe's late scores. The two-movement design, which he used in several of his mature works, images in large the concern with the coincidence of opposites that one hears so clearly at the micro level. The first part alternates two moderate tempi (both andante), the second, two faster tempi (both allegro). The circulation of the total chromatic is much slower in the first than in the second part. In general the first movement is more introspective and confiding,

while the second is more energetic and extraverted. But the whole is notable for the finesse and delicacy with which images of striking originality are colored and shaded without need for unusual string techniques beyond the occasional glissando. Wolpe achieves an extraordinary diversity of texture, character, and colour from exploring least differences among the materials. Although he does not label references to other music in the score, the *Quartet* is alive with fleeting memory traces and rubbings, sometimes witty, sometimes tender, sometimes shocking. Images rich in gesture and affect float in and out of the focus of attention creating a space in which there are wide distances between near and far, high and low, dense and rare, swift and slow. The constraint of composing pieces for solo instruments when his hand movements were cramped by parkinsonism was perhaps in part a preparation for realizing his constellatory, multi-faceted space within the more homogeneous palette of the string ensemble. And so at long last he presented his String Quartet in 1969 with the inscription "To the magnificent Juilliard Quartet, a belated dedication."

▼ **In From Here On Farther** Wolpe moves onward by coming full circle to his roots in "Young Classicism" [*Junge Klassizismus*], the aesthetic advocated by Busoni in which new technical developments are couched in strong and beautiful forms. Busoni had a profound impact on Wolpe's early development, and Wolpe some fifty years later appears to be revisiting and encompassing that aesthetic in the quartet for violin, clarinet, bass clarinet, and piano. Wolpe at first titled the work "Concerto," in the sense of a Baroque ritornello form. *From Here on Farther* is a single movement with

Biographies

James Tenney is a composer, pianist, and theorist whose mentors included Carl Ruggles, Edgard Varèse, and John Cage. He has written works for a variety of media both instrumental and electronic, many of them using alternative tuning systems. He was involved in the development of computer music in the early 1960's, when his compositions and perform-

ances of contemporary music began to gain international recognition. His music is published by Sonic Art Editions and distributed by the Canadian Music Centre and Frog Peak Music. Recordings are available from Aerial, Artifact, Ear, Frog Peak, Mode, Musicworks, and Tellus. His books include *A History of Consonance and Dissonance*, 1988, *Meta+Hodos*, 1961, *META Meta+Hodos*, 1988, and a study of the music of Conlon Nancarrow. He is professor of music at York University and was featured in recent issues of *Musicworks* and *Perspectives of New Music*.

Peter Serkin studied at the Curtis Institute with Lee Luvisi, Mieczyslaw Horszowski, and Rudolph Serkin, and also worked with the late Marcel Moyse and Ernst Oster. He continues to study with Horszowski and Karl Ulrich Schnabel. Serkin has worked closely with such composers as Olivier Messiaen, Toru Takemitsu, Luciano Berio, and Peter Lieberson; he was a founding member of the chamber group Tashi. He has recorded for Pro Arte, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA, Columbia, and Vanguard, and can be heard with the Boston Symphony on New World's recording of Peter Lieberson's Piano Concerto (NW 325).

Pianist **Anne Chamberlain** has performed throughout the United States, in Europe, and in Israel. She has recorded for CRI and Nonesuch including a performance with Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs of Stefan Wolpe's *Enactments for Three Pianos*. In 1986, Ms. Chamberlain received the John Knowles Paine Award in recognition of performances of North American Music of the late twentieth century. Ms. Chamberlain is on the faculty of Simon's Rock College in Massachusetts and plays many concerts in New England.

Mezzo soprano **Jean Stilwell** is well known to Canadian audiences having sung with all the major orchestras and opera companies. In 1989 Stilwell made her debut at the Mostly Mozart festival in New York City with Trevor Pinnock conducting the Vivaldi *Gloria*. Other U.S. appearances include performances of the *Messiah* with the St. Louis Symphony conducted by Pinnock and *A Maske of Time* with the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by Andrew Davis. Stilwell made her European opera debut as Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* with the Welsh National Opera and returned to sing the title role of *Carmen* in 1990.

This past season Stilwell made her U.S. opera debut as Carmen with the Pittsburgh Opera. In the fall of 1993 Stilwell will sing the role with the Canadian Opera Company.

Texts

Friedrich Hölderlin

Translated by Michael Hamburger

The Middle of Life

With yellow pears the land
And full of wild roses
Hangs down into the lake,
You lovely swans,
And drunk with kisses
You dip your heads
Into the hallowed, the sober water.

But oh, where shall I find
When winter comes, the flowers, and where
The sunshine
And shade of the earth?
The walls loom
Speechless and cold, in the wind
Weathercocks clatter.

If from the Distance...

If from the distance where we went separate ways
I'm recognizable to you still, the past,
O you the sharer of my sufferings,
Still can convey to you something pleasant,

Diotima

Bliss of the heavenly Must who on elements once imposed order,
Come, and for me now assuage the chaos come back in or time,
Temper the furious war with peace-giving, heavenly music
Till in the mortal heart all that's divided unites,
Till the former nature of men, the calm, the majestic,
From our turbulent age rises, restored to its prime.
Living beauty, return to the destitute hearts of the people,
To the banqueting table return, enter the temples once more!
For Diotima lives as do delicate blossoms in winter,
Blessed with a soul of her own, yet needing and seeking the sun.
But the lovelier world, the sun of the spirit is darkened,
Only quarrelling gales rage in an icy bleak night.

The Walk

You wayside woods, well painted
On the green and sloping glade
Where I conduct my footsteps
With lovely quiet repaid
For every thorn in my bosom,
When dark are my mind and heart
Which paid from the beginning
In grief for thought and art.
You graceful views in my valley,
For instance garden and tree
And then the footbridge, the narrow,
The stream one can hardly see,
How beautiful, clear from the distance
These glorious pictures shine
Of the landscape I like to visit
When the weather is mild and fine.
The deity kindly escorts us,
At first with unblemished blue,
Later with clouds provided,
Well rounded and grey in hue,
With scorching flashes and rolling
Of thunder, and charm of the fields,

With beauty the bubbling source of
The primal image yields

Fulfillment

When from out of life a man can find himself
And comprehend how a life is experienced —
That is good; who extricates himself from danger
Is like a man who comes from storms and winds.

Better yet is also to know beauty,
Order and the sublimity of all life,
When joy comes from the labor of striving,
And whatever all the good things may be called in these times.

The tree which greens, the summits of boughs and branches,
The flowers that surround the trunk,
Are of divine nature, they are life,
For over them the heavens' air holds sway.

But when curious people ask me,
What it is, to dare commitment to sensibility,
What is the density, the highest, the accomplishment,
Then I say, that's it — life as well as contemplation.

He who views nature as ordinary, calm,
Admonishes me to let others see me as a joyous being.
Why? Clarity it is before which even the wise tremble;
Joyfulness is fine, when everyone jokes and laughs.

The seriousness of men, the victory and the dangers,
They come from education and awareness .
That there is a goal; the best men's highest deeds
Are recognizable in their being and remnant beauty.

They, themselves, however, are like chosen ones,
Of them comes the new, the history;
The reality of deeds does not perish;

Just as stars shine, so there is a life that's grand and sanguine.

Life is composed of deeds, boldness,
A lofty goal, more measured motion,
The pace and gait, yet also bliss from virtue,
And great earnestness, and yet pure youth.

Remorse and past experience
Are two different states in this life; one leads to the bliss
Of fame, and peace and
To all those high and distant regions that are bestowed.

The other leads to torment and bitter pain,
When human beings perish, who play with life;
How changed are form and face
Of him, who did not act fairly and well.

The reality and endurance of shaped life
In these times, the process of men's growth
Is almost a dispute; the one lives for feeling and sensitivity,
The other strives for creative toil.

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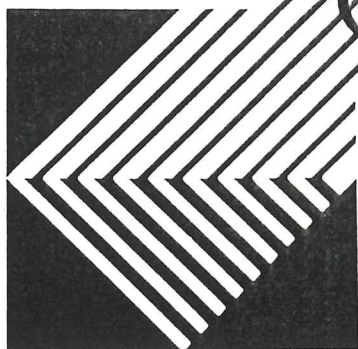
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